

WLC 2016 : World LUMEN Congress. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty 2016 |
LUMEN 15th Anniversary Edition

Rhetoric and Intentionality in the Political Discourse

Nela Mircică^{a*}

* Corresponding author: Nela Mircică, nelamircica@yahoo.com

^a Lecturer Ph.D., “Spiru Haret” University, Bucharest, Romania, nelamircica@yahoo.com, 0724632467

Abstract

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2016.09.74>

The main reason for this study is the urgent need to clarify the relationship between rhetoric and intentionality in the dialogue between the politician and his audience. Rhetoric is a “blank check” for the political discourse; it is concerned with the accurate transmission of what the politician wants to convey, while intentionality aims to achieve the predetermined target, i.e. a certain targeted audience. The rhetorical turning of the language is represented by the argumentative discourse, based on concrete forms of evidence. With all these requirements, expressly formulated, it remains (as a constant) the increased efficiency, pursued within communication, although we cannot expropriate policy from its language. But the rhetoric of the political discourse is a specific one, whether we are talking about the visual or verbal communication. Most often, the messages are proving to be effective only when formulated in simple terms. The logic of the discourse, its degree of susceptibility and so on belong to a language adapted to the expectations of the audience. The cognitive and rational dimension of the discourse must be completed by the argumentative dimension.

We consider that the efficiency of the political discourse depends on the way the message is conveyed, on the purpose of conveying a message as well as on the orientation towards the targeted audience. Therefore, it requires an increased attention on the part of the one elaborating and documenting the discourse.

© 2016 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.uk

Keywords: Rhetoric; intentionality; political discourse.

1. Introduction

The political discourse is one of the most interactive forms of communication and uses the most sophisticated methods of persuasion and argumentation. Problems with a big impact on a large number of people are brought to public attention through it (Popescu, 2015a). In political communication and not only, the message is essential; therefore, the message to be sent is pretty much negotiate. More precisely, it is necessary to undertake a scientific research to identify people's expectations (of an amazing diversity) (Nica & Potcovaru, 2015). Only afterwards the message variants will be formulated, variants on which discussions take place in order to choose the most efficient variant in terms of the idea transmitted, ease of transmission and perception. In election campaigns, the rhetoric of the political discourse is a specific one, whether we speak of visual or verbal communication. Most of the times, the formulation of the messages, that prove to be effective, is achieved in simple terms. We believe that politics, as well as rhetoric, is science and art (at the same time) to convince and the efficiency is ensured by the negotiation activities. From here arises the scientific nature of the political communication. The discourse, if is not free and is not uttered with good diction, if it does not come from a rational thinking (rooted in reality), if is not backed by good intentions, is not convincing and does not gain followers. The logic of the discourse, its degree of impressionability etc. belong to a specific rhetoric. The success of that enterprise depends on the manner in which the rhetorical instruments of a discourse are managed. The message contained, the way it is transmitted, the time when it is transmitted, the attitude of that/those who transmit the information are essential elements in a relationship with the target audience and in negotiating (the purpose of transmitting a message). That is precisely why it should be regarded as being in an indissoluble relationship with these. We want to show that intentionality and rhetoric of the political discourse are two elements that communication specialists must take into account, for a better coordination in achieving the desired objective.

2. Intentionality in the process of communication

Regarding the communication process, from the perspective of its intentionality, we discover the phenomenological thinking, thinking that manifests itself fully in the 21st century. The French phenomenologists are among the first philosophers who consider language as being the objectification of consciousness' intentionality. German phenomenology, particularly through the work of Edmund Husserl, understands intentionality as being pure consciousness' orientation either to an entity outside it or to an entity interior to it. Intentionality is an essential feature of consciousness, feature that makes possible and feasible its transcendental purification. The Husserlian concepts of transcendental purified consciousness and intentionality influence the contemporary thinking in philosophy and science. The French phenomenologists have transferred the phenomenological thinking within sciences. Psychology, located in the area in which the phenomenological way of thinking has been configured, has been among the first sciences with an opening to this type of phenomenological inference. The science of communication has also found itself among the scientific disciplines who have mastered the phenomenological way of thinking. Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricoeur are the French thinkers who were able to highlight new dimensions of language from the perspective of the phenomenology

concerned with the concrete. Thus, for Maurice Merleau-Ponty language is an extension of the consciousness, namely a manifest objectification of it. Language creates the possibility of expressing through words and gestures the consciousness and facilitates the exchange of information. The context in which communication develops and its products are important for the French phenomenologists because they have been concerned about the condition of the concrete human. From their perspective, language accomplishes and implies thinking simultaneously, a thing which gives meaning both to thinking and also to language (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, pp. 88-96). We notice that from the point of view of the social psychology, words (isolated, words do not have a univocal meaning) joined in phrases and spoken in the concrete situational contexts acquire significance (taking into account individual's culture and education level). Within the interactions, the individual learns to use words with meaning. "The language presupposes a consciousness of the language, a silence of the consciousness that wraps the speaking world and in which the words are the first to receive configuration and meaning" (Merleau-Ponty, 1999, p. 471).

Analysing all these, Ricoeur asserts with conviction that we can accede to consciousness only by analysing the words that mediate it (Ricoeur, 1996, pp. 78-96). Because he was concerned about man's inner life, he sought the way to explore it. Thus, he noticed that this unveils to us through language, which is intentional. This thinker is radical and shows us that the man himself, through his existence, is intentional, because he transcends the given situation and thus becomes free to choose between alternatives. We ascertain that this thinker focuses on consciousness, but especially on its manifestations, manifestations that put it into contact with the real world. Thus, the intentional language becomes mediator between the consciousness and the world. This is why, the intentionality that characterizes the language (as a manifestation of consciousness) is actually a transcendence of intentionality from inside the consciousness into the product of consciousness, which is expressed through verbal, written, nonverbal language, through text, image, discourse etc. We notice that the discourse (understood as form of communication that clearly shows the intentional character of language and consciousness respectively) has raised the interest of the French phenomenologists, because it highlights the intentional character of communication; the French phenomenologists' orientation toward the concrete, toward man seen in the context of his human interrelations appears. The discourse is introduced into the context of a concrete event, occurred in time and space; it relates to something (to a world) and to someone (firstly, it's about an interlocutor to whom it addresses to); thus, this form of communication achieves a description of a world it invokes. We consider that discourse is extremely important because of the fact that it has the character of an event with a meaning that gives it a strong intentional character. We notice, as argument in favour of the phenomenological demonstration, discourse's orientation towards convincing the audience of the justness of the sent message. That is precisely why, the discourse shall be constituted in the object of a thorough analysis, conducted in the works of Paul Ricoeur. This places the discourse between the voluntary and the involuntary that characterizes the human behaviour: the discourse is event and meaning, and the voluntary and the involuntary lies at the border between two universes of the discourse, of which the intuition of *cogito* is the intuition of the body itself associated to will, intuition that suffers because of it and which prevails over it; it is the sense of the body as a source of reasons, as beam of the

capabilities and even as necessary nature (Ricoeur, 1967, pp. 10-19). Consequently, the discourse is not intentional itself; the intentionality, conceived by Paul Ricoeur, is much deeper; is the characteristic of will which defeats the involuntary and manifests itself under the form of discourse. We consider that Paul Ricoeur's assertion that shows us that man is a three dimensional entity (existential, axiological, linguistic) opens the field for some questions, to be answered by scientists in the future (taking into account the new communication technologies as well).

We conclude that the opportunity to design meanings onto the surrounding elements is a form of language intentionality. Thus, this possibility gives man the prospect of creating a world made of the products of his thinking and action, which meets his needs (extremely diverse, from the basic needs to the aesthetic needs, to create, of self-realization etc.). The discourse is an event where someone speaks, but does not speak anyhow, but oriented towards an intentional purpose in a world where (through language) something is said about something else. Language is a concrete entity that mediates the relationship between consciousness and the outside world. We discover that, this way, language is the only way by which the subject (man) institutes into the world (shows himself to the world) through the fact that interacts with it. We ascertain that the orientation towards and the interaction with the world, mediated by language, is the discovery of the French phenomenology, which has generated problems and question marks to which psychology has committed to give answers. Thus, phenomenologists have entered into a permanent dialogue with the scientists who study the psyche, the personality and the context in which they manifest. Scientific language increases its value by using the force of example that guides thinking towards the illustrative empirical concrete (Constantin, 2016, pp. 149-153). Scientific-philosophical knowledge has (more pronounced in the 21st century) an extremely important task: starting from the premise that the language allows us a deeper relation with it (even more, allows us to relate ourselves to our most surprising possibilities), it must be continuously appropriate to the content of the communicated message. This is because language as well has a dynamic character. All these do not lead to man's alienation, but to his insertion into the social and historical context. The dimension of the human existence, manifested through language, has required a deep analysis, on several levels, fact which has led to the appearance of the communication sciences. Changing the content of the communication itself (due to changes in the social reality; for example, internet communication reconfigures the dimensions and aspects of the economic activities) (Popescu, 2015b) does not constitute a factor that slows the research of the language problems. We consider that it is essential, for the success of researching the language and communication, to regard man in his totality and complexity as a human, social, historical and cultural being.

3. Political rhetoric in actuality

The rhetoric appeared at the same time with the language, i.e. before human's philosophizing activity. Controversies regarding the two areas of manifestation of the human spirit have always existed. The rhetoric has been constantly reconfiguring to maintain the concordance relationships, in regard to the content, with other disciplines of the spirit. As far as its sphere of action is regarded, the rhetoric is in interlacing relations with other concordant disciplines. Along time, the contributions of philosophy, logic, literature, psychology, etc. have determined the establishment of rhetoric as a

relatively independent entity. Rhetoric has acquired, step by step, its specificity that distinguishes it from other disciplines. A significant development has known rhetoric during the Athenian democracy. The discourse is included among the first rhetoric's forms of manifestation, specifically the political discourse. Demosthenes has been among the first speakers who were concentrating not only on the words pronounced, but also on the voice, the attitude, the posture, the movements, a.s.o. The rules of rhetoric discovered by Demosthenes (and self-imposed in his political battles) are still studied and used today in the confrontations from the present democratic fora. He has contributed to strengthening the rhetoric: he has surpassed the demonstrative genre and has introduced, within the discourse, eloquence (resulted from a deep reflection) and documentation (resulted from a work of ordering the information).

Empedocles is the one that has concluded that the discourse should be adapted to the different categories of listeners and thus has opened the way to diversifying the discourses. Cicero, another great orator, has contributed through his political discourses to the development of rhetoric. These thinkers have crossed the discourse's beauty barrier and have grounded rhetoric on scientific bases. Imagination, seduction, etc. pale before the logical argument introduced by Aristotle in the practice of rhetoric. The French Revolution also had its great orators. Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, despite having a tumultuous life, remained in the memory of the descendants as the greatest orator of the French Revolution and as a remarkable defender of the interests of the many (Zăvălaș, 1993, pp. 34-41). The discourses have become (during the evolution of rhetoric) more and more rational, more rigorously argued, more attached to values. Today, the scientific nature of a well-organized discourse is visible. Undeniable is as well the evolution of rhetoric socially and politically. Society's current needs indicate us the fact that it is necessary to reconsider rhetoric and its use in rational conditions. The rhetorical acts must be organized taking into account a number of criteria that would lead to predetermined effects. Thus, the rhetoric of the discourse is no longer reduced to persuasion; it is much more complex and involves deliberation, demonstration, argumentation, persuasion, decision, etc. It is not just capturing the good will, but presupposes an invitation to reflection, we believe.

The political tribune speaker's discourse must respect the truth and contain an elevated language, which means that it can be compromised by the slightest discrepancy between words and deeds. In and through the political discourse words chosen accurately produce their effects. At the same time, the political discourse must maintain a balance between long speech and concentrated speech, the speaker bearing in mind the fact that the latter makes it easier to set in motion the audience seized with strong emotions. In these circumstances, are set in action the laws that govern human behaviour, both of the social cohesive, consolidated groups, and especially of the ad hoc formed crowds ("hic et nunc").

The texts of the political discourse are built so that they acquire the pursued meaning and induce a thinking and a behaviour favourable to the politician and to that one benefiting from its policy implementation (Hershey & Jo Lewis, 2015). The political language promotes a system of values and monitors the audience's attachment to those values called down through discourse. The political discourse must have a well thought out strategy, so as to achieve its purpose. The topics brought to the forefront concern citizens' general interest; for example, the issues concerning the public administration, the sustainable development that arouses the interest of most citizens of a community (Nica, 2015). We notice that in the political discourse the direct exhortation is avoided, and the verbal

language intertwines with the non-verbal one, the latter having a high percentage and being very well studied by the one who uses it. The proper exhortation comes from the communication through images (candidate's picture, party's logo etc.). The keywords (which are repeated throughout the discourse) from phrases have a well-established role; their impact should be strong and remain in the receiver's memory. We believe that the success of that approach depends to a significant proportion of the image and the keywords used in slogans. The utterance of a slogan (in the case of the electoral political discourse) is not quite easy to elaborate, because it must meet a number of extremely rigorous criteria: to be short, to have few consonants, to be sonorous, to have rhythm, to be easy to pronounce, to express what the speaker has proposed to. Originality is the obligatory element of a slogan, which ensures the desired impact on the audience (Zafiu, 2007, pp. 17-21). We believe that the political discourse must adapt to the needs of those it is addressed to and to stimulate, at the same time, their expectations.

The political discourse must have a real rhetoric value, because it must create views and attitudes among the receptors, fact which leads to achieving its own political goals. The psychological climate in which the discourse is realized is created by scientific rules developed by the social psychology. This scientific discipline, at the border between psychology and sociology and with a rapid evolution in recent decades, studies the relationships, attitudes, motivations, skills relative to social groups (Cohen 2016). The discourse may address the intellectual elites (in this case it must be rigorously constructed, with an elaborated message) or the masses (Chapman, 2016) (in this case it must contain a direct message, which, eventually, to develop a state of emotionality). We consider that rationality and emotionality constitute the central thread around which the discourse with all its rigors is built.

The political discourse has evolved over time with plenty of stagnations and even regresses. The discursive practices are becoming more and more cultured in a society where competitiveness is often manifested in the economic, social, political media. Therefore, the utilitarian side of rhetoric adapted to the current European context highlights the need to restructure the political discourse. Rhetoric proves its educational role within the European Union as well. The rhetorical skills prove their importance in that they intensify the diplomatic and political skills. The business environment, the labour force migration and the acculturation in the context of the current globalization imply politicians' diplomatic and rhetorical skills in negotiations. All these have led to the emergence of some vocational training services where the use of language by scientific rules is learned (Peters, 2015).

The discourse acquires rhetoric also through the topics it addresses; we could say that the topic imposes the rhetoric. For example, when we approach the problem of human trafficking intensification, given the more pronounced techno-ethics progress, (Duong, 2015) we have to treat this problem as an ethical challenge of the third millennium. The stringent problems of our century, such as national health policies (Rehberg, 2015), nationwide education policies (Opie, 2015), the sustainable development and the need for reform in the public administration (Nica, 2015), and social media (Nica, 2015) require the most appropriate words.

4. Conclusions

We believe that rhetoric plays a key role in our activities and interactions (in research, creation, etc.), in our permanent evolution. It is about a well-shaped goal-oriented rhetoric. Our analysis

highlights the fact that intentionality is the state accompanying language along with rhetoric. In the case of the political discourse, what customizes it is reflected in its rhetoric, of which its intention transpires. Given that democracy favours rhetoric, we are entitled to believe that, currently, the discourse in the area of policy knows a period of progress. When we talk about intentionality and rhetoric in language, we find that philosophy spans a bridge to science, so that together to clarify permanently the issues of the language. Philosophy has evolved (no longer resumes to interpreting the results of other disciplines of the human spirit) and states itself the issues to be studied, moreover seeks to resolve issues raised by science. Interpersonal relations are marked by an obvious intentionality. The political discourse is based on a profoundly analysed scenario, characterized by an orientation and by targeting, as well as by a language adequate to the intended purpose (Reveley, 2015). We believe that the researches on the discourse should not be limited to the communication sciences, philosophy and rhetoric being only two of the other areas in which researches on discourse can be developed.

At the same time, we notice that the management of the current political discourse requires the joined use of two elements arising from the philosophical reflection: rhetoric and intentionality. We conclude that the perennial rhetoric is potentiated by intentionality (concept developed relatively recent) and we believe that this fact may be capitalized in the effective management of the political discourses, because the public is more informed, more critical and more responsive to the argued presentation of some to be implemented intentions (Peters & Heraud, 2015).

References

- Chapman, B. (2016). Geopolitics of the 2015 British Defense White Paper and Its Historical Predecessors. *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*, 8(2), 42–63.
- Cohen, C. (2016). Violence between and within Political Parties in Nigeria: Statistics, Structures, and Patterns (2006–2014). *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, 8(2), 30–47.
- Constantin, I. (2016). Pro-substantialists methodological inferences. Bucharest: Ars Docendi.
- Duong, K.A. (2015). Doing Human Trafficking Research: Reflections on Ethical Challenges. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 5(2), 171-190.
- Friedman, H., & Jo Lewis, B. (2015). Looking to Succeed? First, Remember Where You Came From. *Psychosociological Issues in Human Resource Management*, 3(2), 7–16.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945). *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1999). *Phenomenology of perception*. Oradea: Aion.
- Nica, E. (2015). Public Administration as a Tool of Sustainable Development. *Journal of Self-Governance and Management Economics*, 3(4), 30–36.
- Nica, E. (2015). The Function of Social Media in the Health Care Industry. *American Journal of Medical Research*, 2(2), 217-222.
- Nica, E., & Potcovaru, A.-M. (2015). Effective M-Government Services and Increased Citizen Participation: Flexible and Personalized Ways of Interacting with Public Administrations. *Journal of Self-Governance and Management Economics*, 3(2), p. 92-97.
- Opie, B. (2015). The Education State, Conversation and Democracy to Come. *Psychosociological Issues in Human Resource Management*, 3(2), 134-150.
- Peters, M.A. (2015). On Narratives of Self-Formation and Education. *Psychosociological Issues in Human Resource Management*, 3(2), 124-133.
- Peters, M.A. & Heraud, R. (2015). Toward a Political Theory of Social Innovation: Collective Intelligence and the Co-Creation of Social Goods. *Journal of Self-Governance and Management Economics*, 3(3), 7–23.
- Popescu, G.H. (2015a). Sustainable Development and the Implementation of Citizen-oriented Services. *Journal of Self-Governance and Management Economics*, 3(4), 70-78.
- Popescu, G.H. (2015b). The Economic Value of the Industrial Internet of Things. *Journal of Self-Governance and Management Economics*, 3(2), 86-91.

- Rehberg, K. (2015). Revisiting Therapeutic Governance: The Politics of Mental Health and Psychosocial Programs in Humanitarian Settings, *American Journal of Medical Research*, 2(2), 130-169.
- Reveley, J. (2015). Being Positive: Educating for Life in Cognitive Capitalism. *Psychosociological Issues in Human Resource Management*, 3(2), 172–183.
- Ricoeur, P. (1967). *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*. Paris: Edition Montaigne.
- Ricoeur, P. (1996). *Essays on hermeneutics*. Bucharest: Humanitas.
- Zafiu, R. (2007). *Language and political*. Bucharest: University of Bucharest Publishing house.
- Zăvălaș, Ș. (1993). *Introduction to rhetoric*. Bucharest: Europa Ecor University.